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Dear Paul, Mary and Kevin

Trade Union Facility Time

Thank you for your recent letter regarding Trade Union Facilities time and your request that the local authority should establish a central pool to cover staffing costs.

Whilst I sympathise with some of the points you have made, the council's current view is to continue with the arrangements that are in place. This is based on the following observations:

- The government's direction of travel in recent years has been to increase accountability and responsibility for schools, allowing them to make their spending decisions directly. The published [advice on trade union facility time](#) makes it clear that, where the local Schools Forum has decided not to de-delegate facility time, individual schools manage their own facility time arrangements, and provides advice to school leaders on their responsibilities.
- Portsmouth Schools Forum agreed on 7th December 2016 that de-delegation should no longer take place for facility time after 31st August 2017 and that a traded service should be available from 1st September 2017 instead. This agreement was carried by 7 votes to 1, with one abstention. As of October 2017, 53 schools and academies (out of a total 63 schools) are signed up to the agreement which suggests that the switch from de-delegation to trading has not significantly harmed the level of funding available for facility time.
- The arrangements for de-delegation can be onerous and out of proportion to the level of funding involved. For example, any de-delegated services must be agreed by Schools Forum by phase and on an annual basis. Also, where schools change status during the year, then the funding de-delegated from the closing maintained school must be effectively paid back to the opening academy. Special schools and PRUs cannot have funds de-delegated, so separate traded services arrangements have to be put in place for them.

- The council would be reluctant, therefore, to propose a change to the current traded services arrangement, since this would add to the administrative burden, with little perceivable benefit for the trade unions or schools.
- As maintained schools in Portsmouth have continued to convert to academy status (academies now make up more than 50% of Portsmouth schools), the value of delegation has been outweighed by the administration involved. We have therefore moved more towards offering traded services (including one for facility time) so that all maintained schools and academies have an equal opportunity, as well as individual choice, to buy the services on offer. Services can be offered for multiple years where appropriate, which provides more clarity over funding.
- The introduction of the traded service appears to fit better with the government's decision to provide more autonomy to schools and the reduction in the role of local authorities. It also allows trade unions to engage more directly with schools and thus illustrate the benefits to schools of a co-ordinated approach to providing facility time.

I will continue to review the position and will share your letter and this response with Schools Forum Members.

Yours sincerely



Mike Stoneman
Deputy Director of Education

cc Alison Jeffery, Director of Children, Families and Education